

Have you brushed your pet's teeth today?

Guelph, ON - Periodontal disease, an inflammatory condition of the tissues supporting the teeth, is the most commonly diagnosed illness in pets, with some studies reporting up to 85 per cent of dogs and 90 per cent of cats affected. While it's common, progressive, and painful, it's also preventable – and even reversible – in the early stages.

So, how can we best care for our pets' teeth? Plaque, not tartar, is the biggest contributor to periodontal disease. Because plaque is invisible, we need to act long before the teeth appear to be visibly dirty. There are several steps we can take to improve oral health in our pets:

Daily tooth brushing. This manually removes plaque, and is the best way to prevent dental disease. To be effective, tooth brushing must be done on a daily basis.

Regular oral exams. A veterinarian can identify periodontal disease in early stages, and can identify other factors that contribute to the accumulation of plaque and tartar (i.e. broken teeth, crowded teeth, retained baby teeth).

Regular professional cleaning under anesthesia. Just like humans, regular professional cleaning is important to remove plaque accumulated below the gum line, and it's the only way to remove tartar. Why is anesthesia needed? Can you imagine trying to get under your cat or dog's gum line while they are awake?!

High quality nutrition. Proper nutrition helps support healthy tissues throughout the body, including the oral cavity. Diets formulated specifically for oral health use textured kibble to encourage chewing and help scrub plaque from chewing teeth. In some diets, additional ingredients are included to reduce plaque and tartar formation, which benefits all the teeth in the mouth.

Healthy chewing habits. Dogs in particular love to chew, and chewing is beneficial to oral health. It's important to encourage healthy chewing by selecting toys and chews appropriate for the pet's size that won't damage the teeth. Avoid inflexible items, like deer antlers and bones, which can fracture teeth.

A successful oral health care plan is a collaboration between the pet, the pet owner and the veterinary healthcare team. By implementing these strategies early, we can improve our pet's oral health, which means a happy pet, free from oral pain.

Brush your pets' teeth today!

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